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THE ROMANES LECTURE

1895

*The
Obligations of the Universities
towards Art*

BY

W. HOLMAN HUNT

DELIVERED

IN THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE, MAY 30, 1895



London

HENRY FROWDE, AMEN CORNER, E.C.

OXFORD: CLARENDON PRESS DEPOSITORY, 116 HIGH STREET

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W. HOLMAN HUNT

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HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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P R E F A C E

No one who has experienced the satisfaction of knowing the leading Universities of this country during the last half of the century, can have failed to remark the increasing interest in Art on the part of their members. I have followed this advancing recognition of the Art I pursue, since first as a visitor to Oxford, in the year 1850, I made the acquaintance of many of its Fellows, and leaders of the time.

William Sewell, the founder of Radley, on one occasion, lecturing on a general subject—when I attended with Mr. and Mrs. Combe—took occasion to refer, in terms of dignified laudation, to the active and courageous taste which they had shown, in bringing to the city, at their own initiative, works of art of a disputed but obviously conscientious character. In doing so, he expressed the conviction that Art is a necessary attainment for a refined Nation.

At the same period lectures were delivered by Dr. Wellesley on the Raphael drawings in the Taylor Buildings.

The roof of Merton Chapel was then fresh with the decorations executed by John Hungerford Pollin, one of the Fellows of the College. Ere the scaffolding was removed, John Everett Millais had taken advantage of it to copy some of the old glass in the window, as an accessory in a picture he was painting. This contact of representatives of University learning and taste with artistic knowledge and proficiency was not merely of transient importance.

A few years later Dr. Henry Acland had succeeded in his efforts to extend the teaching of the University to Science, and the new Museum by Woodward and Deane was in progress. This brought Dante Gabriel Rossetti, my fellow-student at the Royal Academy, and my recent painting pupil, on a visit to the University. He commenced certain mural decorations in the 'Union,' for which he enlisted the efforts of Spencer Stanhope, who had taken to painting after completing his undergraduate term, with those of certain young London artists, who had volunteered their gratuitous services.

William Morris and Edward Burne Jones were by Rossetti's encouragement on that occasion induced to adopt the career of Art. The Schools of Design soon after were found to be a necessity to the city. A few years later John Ruskin was installed as Slade Professor to the University, and on Mr. Combe's death, his widow gave 'The Light of the World' to Keble College, and

last year her further collection of pictures was bequeathed to the Taylor Buildings.

That Professor Romanes shared with others in the University this steadily growing interest in Art, to those who knew him needs little proof; but I call to mind an occasion, when in a London drawing-room, he introduced me with much enthusiasm to the name of an artist I had not before heard of, and in confirmation of his well-placed admiration, he took pains to procure many of Mrs. Treuquair's imaginative and highly poetic illuminations for me to see, convincing me at the same time of his serious estimate of Art, and of how he regarded its healthy cultivation as important for a people's life.

These memories, when it became my duty to consider the responsibility of the trust with which I was honoured as Romanes lecturer on Art, could not but demand the gravest attention: and they encouraged me to appear not as a passing entertainer, but as a faithful witness on the question which is now admittedly one of the most sacred importance.

Many of my compeers in the profession have lately spoken to me with the greatest anxiety of the influences in operation, of a kind injurious to wholesome taste, and to the future of English Art, and they have deplored the increasing assumption on the part of perfectly untrained and self-elected guides who trifle with the honest

dictates of reason in the young devoting themselves to the career.

These plaints have not been uttered in any narrow spirit, for it is evident the misdirection has been made not only in the loose and prejudiced spirit of previous journalistic writers on Art, but in the interests of a new movement, proclaiming a complete contempt for beauty of body and mind, and recommending young adventurers with paint and clay to emulate one another in setting at naught patient study and painstaking.

Leading up to this innovation, critics have for years advocated study in Paris, and many young men who have late in life taken to Art as a profession, and who know the commercial value of newspaper championship, have adopted this counsel, and have followed the wildest deviations of the realistic school, and so found a communistic road to distinction, the discoverers of which—spurred by inevitable antagonism to the over-sentimental and prettified idealism formerly paramount—have preferred a course the furthest away from fastidiousness of every kind.

The works of this realistic school are of a nature which to any previous age would have been inconceivable, and to any future generation it may be concluded they will be quite incredible, for it is impossible that the common sense of the world can exercise patience enough to preserve them even as curiosities.

In the Salon in 1887, and in 1888 at Earl's Court, was a painting of life size, rewarded with the *prix d'honneur*: it represented the interior of an Indian hut; the head of the family, just returned from his labours in the field, was in the foreground looking with horror upon the scene that lay in front of him; in the centre of the canvas were gorged tigers, with the mangled remains of the mother and children strewn about the floor. Other works appear in each exhibition of equally brutal subjects, and without even the inventiveness of this composition. Realistic sculpture moreover is produced, of a kind to convince the spectator that humanity has truly *descended* from the brutes.

In 1889 or 1890 there was a group, more than full size, of a gorilla carrying away under his left arm a woman whom he had captured. This delectable production was also distinguished by the *prix d'honneur*, and it was while on exhibition surrounded each day by groups of all classes of people.

It would be impossible that such examples of work in the name of Art should not have a mischievous effect upon those students who, without natural strength of mind and taste, are unable to resist the arguments coming from the admiration of a noisy circle; and accordingly, our own school is in a state of overwhelming confusion, most injurious to such as work modestly and with sweet inspiration. No one can doubt that it is our duty fearlessly to denounce this false taste.

Owing to the distinction of the post that I have been permitted to occupy, my words will remain on record, and my course will be judged by Time.

In confidence that I shall be justified in what cannot but appear as severe condemnation of a school, powerful while it is still in fashion, I submit my verdict on the latest phase of modern Art, and on that of all past imaginative design, to the impartial world, and give my reasons for the course which in sequel I respectfully submit for the consideration of the University.

W. HOLMAN HUNT.

June, 1895.

THE
OBLIGATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITIES
TOWARDS ART

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR,

I do not know that I should hesitate to avow, that when I received from the University through you the flattering invitation to address an audience from this dignified rostrum, I had some doubt in my mind whether I should be justified in displacing one of the many who would so worthily have continued the glorious though brief traditions of this particular foundation: some master of knowledge, who would not only have fully repaid the hearers for the sacrifice of the hour, in wise suggestion, but would moreover have won all hearts by rhythmic eloquence.

It was only my conviction of the duty of every elder in an art, to hand on from his own generation to the next the traditions proved to be of sterling worth, which were entrusted to him by his forerunners, and the convictions formed thereon, that prevailed with me to accept the responsible appointment.

The Founder of this Lectureship is proved to have

been an ever-diligent and conscientious student ; this is seen by the problems in science which he examined and solved, and by his faith in the inexhaustibleness of research to which he ever gave witness.

In addition to these attributes of a master of his craft, there was in him the crowning spirit—which ever marks the great—of being more than a mere specialist.

Only by this extra activity of mind is a man strong enough for self-surrender. A king is greater than a tyrant, a general more than a devastator, a judge higher than an exact lawyer, a scientist of fuller insight than a microscopist, and an artist of larger mind than a mere skilful manipulator.

To this higher class it was that Professor Romanes, in recognizing that there is still an outside region to those mysteries fathomable by the profoundest human investigation, proved himself to belong. In accepting the principle of the survival of the fittest, he saw that it must be never again the brutally fittest ; it must be the mentally, the morally, and also the spiritually fittest ; for otherwise civilization had been wrong in supplanting savagedom, and in establishing that force of peace and order by self-control, under which Darwin had been able to pursue his profitable investigations. The narrow-minded are to be found in every pursuit, in none more at this period than in Art, and I speak primarily not of my branch of it alone, but of that larger region, in which the human mind conveys original thought or fancy to others, of which Art in form and colour is only a part.

The noisiest spokesmen of to-day claim for Art that

it should be supreme and independent, and have no relation whatever to the national soul—a costly trinket to be picked up where it may be found, and idly played with; that above all qualities it must exhibit light and facile workmanship; that it has nought to do with virtue, vice, honour or dishonour; that it is to serve mainly as an excitement of sensation. One of the faction lately declared that the pleasure which music, architecture, poetry, painting, or sculpture should communicate, would be exactly that which a glass of good wine would give to the senses.

Let me say at once that this view of Art, while it undoubtedly has a seductiveness in its 'modernity,' fails altogether to recommend itself to my mind. Modernity has certainly the merit of freshness, and since every new generation has the right—and is even bound in some sort—to judge the past, there is an initial wisdom in its activity, but there must be great care taken that inexperience does not misunderstand the old questions and overlook the seriousness of any rejection it decides upon. The fact of its contempt for precedents invites supervision and care ere justifying the destructive course; and when these are acting it will be seen that many of the hasty judgements proposed would have been disastrous, and that modernity itself has been on its trial and found wanting. The doctrine supported by it in this day seems indeed insidiously degrading. We are in a world in which all things act and re-act on one another, and Art can never be indifferent and hold itself aloof from the vital movement; if it will not take part in the march forward to a great end, but sever itself

from sympathy with general goodness, it transfers its energy to evil; refinement, if it will not serve honesty and modesty, will pander to grossness. It will be a varnish to corruption, a whitened sepulchre:

‘Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.’

The effects of a hedonistic philosophy already show themselves. It is time to take alarm, and to set our faces against its use of the weapons of knightly art; for if we yielded these we should be handing over our nation and every precious attainment of the civilized world, with all that is dearest—perfected only by long past effort—to ruin and chaos, and the prejudice once blindly entertained against Art would be more than justified.

The fashionable dogmas of theorists encouraging the belief that Art is a profound mystery, needing the guidance of experts fluent in theories and phrases to persuade that what commends itself to the unprejudiced as right is wrong, and what presents itself to the uninitiated as vulgar and barbarous is perfection, do undoubtedly intimidate the diffident and cause confusion and despair in the minds of persons otherwise altogether competent to exercise judgement on the question.

The ears are invited to place themselves in the judgement-seat of the eyes. To still the confusion it is in vain to trust to silent contempt, and vague remonstrance only adds to the Babel:

‘For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out “Hush!”’

It must be expected that I have examined into the

nature of the disorder, and should be able to explain the cause. To do this I must demonstrate how in all times there have been evils that have been inherent in the society in which Art has arisen, that a proportion of these have grown and accumulated about her while she has been overcoming other ills, and that she has often, like Herakles, perished from the poison robe craftily furnished by the vanquished.

What is eternally precious is the sublimated message that purifying time has left of the artist's soul. To discover this refined element, and with it to chasten their own developing faculties, is what all true sons of Art have to do ; they may then erect their own temple on the sure platform of Truth.

Men impatient for personal éclat, pecuniary profit, or immediate honour, more than for the advancement of a great purpose, have their minds entangled by the delusive surroundings of the art of the past ; they take the baser conditions of life which are chronicled in the histories of the eminent, not as the survivals of barbarism or the accidents of the epoch, but as the mark of the divine afflatus.

Above all interest to idlers is the desire to pass without effort as the crowned genius ; it is easy to adopt the faults of the great, and triflers do not fail in this imitation. It may be that they note the facility which the finished master after a life of painstaking delighted in, and the liberties he took to express his purpose : facility in the hands of shallow followers naturally means emptiness, and liberty being without purpose is naught but license. Those who, in these days, begin

their career without understanding or reverence for predecessors are many, for they who set the example are now grey in practice. Many painters abroad proclaim that the less students look at the antique and the old masters the better for them, declaring that the past can teach nothing ; they are, surely, like quacks who, disdaining the teaching of the past world's wisdom, without the training directed by patient study, undertake to minister to suffering humanity. The law in extreme cases steps in to punish the medical pretender, but in Art his fellow is left altogether unchecked.

The effect of the schools established in conformity with such habits of mind is seen around us—in a fever justly enough characterized by Nordau as *degeneration* : he is wise in this, however much he may be at fault in some of his facts.

Supported by the healthy antecedents of our Nation, we should not hesitate to condemn the festering corruption as having no part in wisdom, beauty, and real joy.

Let us consider what true Art essence is. It is one and indivisible, whether it prompts the artist to affect the mind through the channel of the eye or the ear. In either case the desire is to make others participate in the delight of what seems to him a new revelation of beauty.

Art inspiration is the redundancy of an overflowing heart. It is the spirit of love. In a modern poem of great excellence, there is a passage brilliant with keen and precious definition, too long to quote at length ; it runs thus :—

'Art is nature raised above
Accident by human love,
Marring mist of accident
By chance and vile occasion sent,
Touched by love's divining-rod¹.'

To those who delight not in either the moral or the physical beauty of any sight or sound they see or hear, the chivalry that made the sentinel at Pompeii die at his post, the heroism that makes a sailor in the night dive into the black and tumbling waters to save a fallen comrade, are sheer folly ; to them the nightingale's song is without charm ; the illumination of the setting sun on the expanse of a goodly earth does not make them turn their eyes, or if they do declare themselves moved, it is from conventional example ; and the raptures of another over hitherto unrecorded beauty in regions unexplored—still wanting the finger-post of stale authority—are eccentricity and affectation.

Such uninspired beings must publish a philosophy of their own ; they teach that natural beauty is imaginary, from habitual association, that moral beauty exists not, that all creatures should follow selfish impulse, that there is no right, no wrong, and that egotism will work out the best end ; these men have no instinct of selection ; they may be versed in the catch phrases of Art, but they are not artists. They can speak only the slang that is current, and with it they destroy inspiration.

With the true artist we have seen it is a question with what means he shall interpret God's harmony of the

¹ *Merlin, a Dramatic Poem.* By Ralph Macleod Fullarton. William Blackwood & Sons. 1890.

spheres: this will depend upon his natural endowments and upon his opportunities. My life-long observation satisfies me that in accordance with the elevation of his aims will be the richness and the infinite mystery of the artist's power of expression. All past great Art was born of religious thought, and thus acquired its strength; although in its prime, from the developing enthusiasm of the chastened worker's mind, it was often wisely employed in an extended field.

It has happened in this country, in certain generations, that men with the natural faculty for Art have had no opportunity for expression, except through the channels of literature: the spirit thus revealed has ever been distinct and individual, and different from that of any other people.

We shall see that the literature of a nation is exactly what its graphic and plastic art is, and by this rule it might have been predicted what its painters and sculptors would have done during the ages in which they were checked by the troubles of civil wars and religious persecutions; for the poets of this England of ours, having sounded unalloyed words of large-hearted and true affection, sifted from all false sentiment, honest and unaffected even when they have been unrestrained or licentious, have incidentally, by this very individuality of imagination, demonstrated that the misfortunes which for so long time manacled the sculptors' and painters' art, have caused England to lose a high and special means of doing her part in the refining of the still untamed world.

Pictorial art is the handwriting of a nation, the

signature, the autograph ; it is not the mere cross-mark of a clown, nor the imprint of the thumb of a savage. It is not superseded by the Great Seal, for it represents even more than the decisions of law-makers. It puts into tangible form the affections and restraints of a people in varying but ever just balance. It is not servilely imitative, it is selective as is all poetry ; therefore it is not strictly imitative at all, for everything in nature changes like summer vapour, and the purview of the searching eye is unlimited, while a picture is the epitome of the glory of a scene not present in any given moment or in any limit of space. A literal transcript is not a picture. Indeed, Art as seen in a decorative design is often infinitely higher than it is in a painted canvas. Art expressed in form and colour embraces every kind of design, every manufactured shape, for the humblest as well as those intended for the most royal purposes. When there is no sense of national design in common utensils, you may be sure that the art of pictures is not in a healthy condition.

You recognize a Chinese article by the device it has upon it ; the barbarous extravagance and self-assertion of the Celestial Empire serve as a striking example of what with attention we see in more modest form on the face of every product from ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Italy, early Germany, and Holland. You identify each invention, whether it be a temple, a statue, a painting, an ornamental panel, a coin, a bust, or a jar containing perfumes, as the one particular nation's work, distinct at first sight from all others, just as the penmanship of one friend from another's is clear. You

knew a writer before as possessing qualities endearing him to you, and directly you see his handwriting you hail it as a part of that gentle and beloved individual. He could not help making a picture of himself; when he wrote with his own hand, he inadvertently even made a sign of his transient condition. If we were profound enough we might see if he were well or ill, grave or gay, when he took pen in hand, and the writing would remain ever thus speaking; but there have been knightly heroes *sans peur et sans reproche* who could not write at all, and there are nations that have done grand actions which have had no individual art at all, the kings whereof, wanting to put on record their deeds, have had to call in strangers to their aid (the public letter-writer from the market-place); but in these days is such a nation enviable?

It is certain that our nation was for some unhappy generations in this position. We have to understand why this was so, and how far we still suffer the consequences.

It will be seen that in other nations there is a singular uniformity of history in all branches of Art. The sister arts have flourished coincidently. Architecture, sculpture, decoration, and painting have grown simultaneously with letters; painting coming to full perfection somewhat later than literature, yet with this tardiness in her progress, who needs so many handmaids of science, perspective, the laws of light and shade, of colour and of optics, it may still be said that our art in all her ways (the art of shaping materials into living thoughts), walks in step with poetry and

music in mutual effort to arouse human responsiveness.

It needs but brief reference to historical examples to verify this proposition.

In the case of Egypt (from causes outside our purpose to determine), after the imitative art in early periods had reached astonishing excellence, a palsy fell upon it, which in later millenniums reduced it to servility. It might be found that this was equally so with its literature. Greece and Rome, severally, used all the arts with equal candour, to express the national spirits and humour.

Greek art was the outgrowth of desire to make the *body* of man the perfect image of their highest mind. The artists strove to eliminate the vanities of false taste—for there were dwarfing vanities afield even then—and to teach nobility of form accompanying heroism in gods, demi-gods, and their worshippers. In establishing an ideal of highest beauty and heroism they—as brute struggle had decided in savage life—determined upon the selection of the fittest, but they brought into count not the need of animal force alone, but the domination of mind and soul. They did this for all time and for all future nations; and thus was committed an eternal gain to the world's care.

I think the literature also may be classed as directed to the athletic training of the mind. In Rome these great traditions were accepted, but with Latin imperiousness were made to subserve more strictly human interests. Abstract idealities became themes for per-

sonal flatteries, individual life and its conditions engaged the sculptor's sympathies. There grew up a sense altogether novel (and it was a noble one) of dramatic interest in humble personages; 'The boxing Boys,' 'The Faun playing cymbals,' 'The fighting Gladiator,' 'The dying Goth,' serve as examples of this change of spirit. With the assertion of predominance of interest in the ways of actual men came a less ideal form, but it carried with it the miracle of noble human evolution, and it was altogether free from reversion to brute form such as some modern realists would have us accept as truth.

Compared with Greek sculpture the difference was as that between Homer, Hesiod and Aeschylus on the one side, and Virgil, Theocritus, and Horace on the other. I have no right to follow this parallel further, but my examples are offered to illustrate the truth that in the best days art and literature had the same distinctive national character. Painting in early days was little more than coloured bas-reliefs, with the relief preparation abandoned. Pliny's record is only of single figures, or if more, only of figures grouped as they might be in sculpture. We see interesting examples of such treatment from Pompeii, and the gracefulness of some of these figures enables us to understand how beautiful many of the paintings preserved in the Capitol must have been; but there could have been no complete pictures in any modern sense, for perspective had not been sufficiently mastered to enable artists to execute works such as did the advanced Italians. In what was achieved the debasements of the

social life of the epoch were not separable in the minds of contemporaries from the eternal beauty which the work incorporated. Phryne and Antinous, the sculptor's models, were honoured in the minds of onlookers more than was the idealized glory of the statues. When the fullest excellence possible under the reigning philosophy had been embodied, the artist's soul could gain no further afflatus, and his heart died, and was buried for a thousand years; then, the crucible of Time having burned away the corroding dross, henceforth to the pure, all was for ever purified.

The leading notes of Italian art were sounded by Giotto and Dante. The concord was a melodious heralding of the new life. The painter's pronouncement was large-hearted and interpretable for all time. The poet-in-words challenged awe, akin to fear and trembling, so that men scarcely yet dare openly to question the sacredness of the strains he left. His humour was exclusive and stern, with occasional tenderness, as shown in the story of Paolo and Francesca, of a kind sedative to keen judgement. The superpersonal love which inspires heaven's poets was exhibited by him scarcely in charitable affections or overflowing joy in God's creations, it was spent in denunciations of unrighteousness, and in the exquisite form of his work. With sublime confidence of conviction he expressed his meaning with precision and richness such as a god might envy. And yet, if I may declare my own instincts, not by these charms are the horrors of the situations redeemed. It is most important frankly to mark the temper of his philosophy, because at first

English poets would have none of it, although they perfected their harmony by the study of its form.

While dealing with purgatory, heaven, and hell, nowhere is Christ the ever-present Redeemer and Comforter. Dante's imaginations of God's eternal justice are evidently referred to by Shakespeare,

‘To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling¹.’

Beyond the general conception in the *Divina Commedia*, Dante professes personal principles as noble, which are, if put to the test of candid judgement, absolutely repulsive.

In canto xxxii, and still more in canto xxxiii, of the *Inferno*², he justifies the very worst nature which Italy's accusers condemn her for tolerating in her lowest classes—cunning, violence, and deliberate falsehood.

Often in the world we experience the delight of finding men better than their creeds. I have known Moslems with genuine affection for Christians and Jews, but there is ever the fire burning beneath which fanaticism may cause to burst into flame, and then reason and charity lose their power over the mind.

Such fanaticism Dante sanctified in adopting the adamantine sternness of the priestly dogma of the dark ages.

Michael Angelo was not alone among Tuscan painters

¹ *Measure for Measure*.

² See appended Notes.

in embracing it. In the 'Last Judgement' he painted Christ as the implacable Judge; in following the terribleness of his precursor he enforced a rule of faith that was repellent. Retribution traced by the sons of earth upon individuals behind the veil is—like the law of poetic justice in romantic fiction enforced by some novelists in their dramas—accepted by readers only as a convention of art. Faith trusts in a more patient mood.

To most Italians the offering of beauty was an all-sufficient gift; they accepted this, while they rejected the sternness which accompanied it, and turned aside from tenderer admonitions, losing thus the strength of self-government. The sentiment of Dante's love for Beatrice (particularly as this was elaborated in the *Vita Nuova*) became part of a religion to them, it surely encouraged a passion to parade emotion and to attitudinize in languor. The gentle sense of many of Giotto's successors made them consult their own hearts as their better guide, and by this evangel they did works that made the whole world kin; but the darnel seed of Italian imagination had taken root, it germinated in a practical disbelief in celestial overrule, and with faith destroyed the people pursued craft and Machiavellianism, which led them to the angry shedding of blood, and even to the use of poison in the sacramental cup.

Art refines the emotions taxed in daily life, and manners ever re-act upon her. In the art of design, after a career of truly sublime advance for over two hundred years, the tares strangled the still robust life. They imposed for every passion a particular action, a turn of the head for every emotion, a contortion of the face for each

expression, till Art became a mere collection of tricks, the ashes of which, as a benefaction to the French Academy, Le Brun soon after scraped up from the floor of the defunct Italian schools.

Viollet le Duc proves beyond question that in France, a century before Art arose in Italy, it was cultivated, and attained extraordinary grace and power. I understand him to contend further that by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries certain sculpture decorating the exterior of Notre Dame de Paris, the cathedrals of Amiens and Sens, even excels Michael Angelo's work! The writer is in general such an astute and well-balanced theorist that it seems graceless to refuse to follow him to his end, but surprisingly living and beautiful as are some of the specimens of early statuary that he cites, both as to design and figure-form, they do not warrant comparison with the 'Madonna and Child' at Ghent or the 'Pietà' in St. Peter's. We end his instructive essay by asking what became of this wonderful vitality in early French Art. There was a distinct pause for a century, and then Italian artists were invited by the Court of France, and from that time to this there have arisen in France a few (and only a few) artists with any message of healthy sweetness to the world. Poussin and Watteau were certainly in differing modes among these highly endowed ones.

Thackeray notes the insatiable love of bloodshed which the French artists of his day exhibited; without murder in one form or another no layer on of paint or moulder of clay could hope to win a grand reputation; he extracts from the catalogue of the current salon

eleven sequent titles of paintings of death scenes by different artists, principally by chevaliers, and he says they ought to be called *chevaliers de la mort*. The taste was not a transient one. No visitor to Paris can fail to see that blood is regarded as a standard enrichment of a painting. This is natural to a people who fight duels about trifles, and who treat war as though it were a virtue to find occasion for it; with such a passion it would be impossible that the Art should be of generally pure and ennobling character.

It would require a more extensive survey of the Art of our brilliant neighbours than the occasion allows, to determine its true character. I have not concealed my lack of enthusiasm for the tone of their artistic spirit, but I would not be understood as being blind to the value of their best work. If the accomplishment of paintings exciting great intellectual interest were all-sufficient, undoubtedly France would stand very high, if not pre-eminent, in its modern painters.

De la Roche, Gérôme, and Meissonier have each executed works of extraordinary power in this direction; but, for the bountiful genius of Art, for the appeal to that side of our sensitiveness truly described by Browning in his lines—

‘We’re made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us¹,’

they scorn to show a sign.

The Parisian artist does not cultivate that power

¹ *Fra Lippo Lippi.*

*It uses us to help each other so
Lending our hands out.*

which thrills the spectator's heart for the sorrows or joys of an actor in the picture's drama, by stamping the children of men as, although clouded, yet truly sons of heaven. His figures may be of true proportion and of standard colour, but with these merits achieved the master stops short of all attempt to possess his figures of a charm, beauty, and personality commanding love. I might say—if to convey a meaning it were permissible to exaggerate—that the spectator looks on but with the coldness felt at the acting of marionettes; the figures are in their places on the board, their positions are perfectly explanatory, and the subject is so graphically realized that you may remember it for ever, but there is nothing more, and it excites no unrestrainable desire, as with a thing of real beauty, to see it again.

As a remarkable exception to the mere scientific excellence of French artists, Millet will always be recognized as a designer of true poetic quality, and I must here testify that a painting by Jules Breton of 'Les Moissonneurs,' I hold to be akin to works by the greatest masters.

Yet I will not hesitate to avow the belief that, on the whole, French Art has done great harm to the world, that what it produces of late days is often the antichrist of Art, being not an emanation from love but from hate. There are some amongst the nation who hear the appeal, 'Come out of her, my people'; these I know would concur in my verdict and agree that the nation has adopted the impure entanglements of the Art of previous races, and found original delusions in addition, so that false sentiment, triviality of purpose, and negation of

elevated thought and beauty, and even more blameable defects, have become their own gospel to follow and preach ; and as this is easy to understand and practise too many apostles are induced to spread it abroad.

Yet it must be excepted that there are one or two naturalistic sculptors in France who have produced admirable works, and these are true representatives of its mediæval sculptors.

I wish we had more time to treat of the Art of England. It had a noble beginning in the reign of Henry III, which all may learn by reading Flaxman's Lectures and Stothard's illustrated volume on the paintings in the old Palace of Westminster destroyed by fire in 1834. The Scotch War of Independence, with all its troubles, was succeeded by the wars in France of a hundred years, which, with the York and Lancaster contest, managed to engage the energy of the nation until the Reformation troubles were at hand. We take our struggles for freedom—or what may be made to figure as such—very ruinously. Our mediæval disorders could not destroy the art of letters, but they did for one hundred and fifty years reduce it to rudeness. Neither altogether could they destroy Art living in builded forms ; but the arts of painting and sculpture are personally costly to conduct, and without a nation's care for the matter, the Art must die out, and many quiet years of a new generation are needed to revive native ability.

When a period of peace came and want of artistic power was felt, it was supplied by foreigners, and they flourished until driven out by the Parliamentary

troubles. After these were over they came again, and the work they left us was most precious; but a superstitious prejudice against native art was established which has never since died out. This has ever been a great injustice to English art; it made the profession a hopeless one for men of the race of Shakespeare and Milton; it led to the absolute death of painting at the end of the days of Sir Godfrey Kneller, and the Art course became a desolated stadium.

Without any honours offered for the contest Hogarth entered the arena. He had the pure blood of an Englishman; he laughed to scorn the thought of following the decrepit and the dead. He determined to be understood of the people; we judge him wrongly when we take his representations of low vice as pictures; for he was as much a humanitarian as he was a painter, and he hated cruelty, drunkenness, sensuality, and untrustworthiness as he loved innocence and straightforwardness. For pictures, he kept ideas which had the poetic redeeming grace of beauty, but there was no Humane Society, no power of any kind to combat hidden vice, and no journalistic exposure in his day. He felt the power in his hands to lash evil, and so at times he went from art, to reveal the untold horrors of false society, and he made coarse engravings of such scenes, only using the artist's cunning in the epitomizing and contrasting of facts.

A good lover is of necessity a good hater: he detested the ugly, although he dealt much with it; but in his pictures he gave the beauty which opens the heart of the spectator for helpless innocency at the first

glance. Look for example at the affianced bride playing with her wedding ring in the first of the Marriage à la Mode series. Before Hogarth had run his course, Reynolds appeared with a mandate from other sources of life, or rather from another side of the same life; for it is interesting to note that they both depicted England at the same epoch, and both men take higher rank by the contrast.

Certainly Reynolds did not take the course of a prophet of wrath; he had not the temper to see the evils around him. In fact he brought out the children from the courts and alleys of the town and made them into poems; a link-boy he converted into Cupid, a beggar-man into a 'banished lord,' and a broken-down ancient with the mould of noble breed was promoted to poetic humiliation as Count Ugolino; at times he transformed ladies of mysterious status into heroines such as men would die for. He spent himself freely day by day on something rich and rare, and he adds just this one distinction in his portraiture which it never thoroughly had before—the genius of unselfish love irradiating the pictured beings.

There is a display, splendid indeed, about a portrait of Titian, Raphael, and Velasquez, which is ever dignified, beautiful, and often supremely graceful, but it is display of a kind which affects your soul with nothing beyond intense admiration. The first English portrait-painter was not satisfied in reliance upon such claim to the approval of his patrons (unless perhaps when the subject was a man of defiant character or a lady of frivolous mind).

For example, if painting the Princess Sophia of Gloucester, Velasquez, under such sense of responsibility, would have pourtrayed her in a dress such as only cruel ingenuity could devise to make her look as much as possible like a wooden doll. (It were ignorance not to appreciate this royal naturalist, but I don't think his most exclusive admirers, if unenslaved, can care about his 'infantas.') Reynolds represents the infant princess lying along the grass with her baby arm around the neck of a little Scotch terrier, which undulates its body on the opposite half of the picture, while the four eyes in the centre of the picture are staring straight at the spectator, the baby being just about to laugh and the dog at the point of barking.

It would take much too long a time to give the merest sketch of the man's endless invention, although to do any justice to the school of English painting inaugurated, after such long interruption, early in the last century, hundreds of examples of love and joy should be quoted, and Reynolds's noble rival and emulator, Gainsborough, should be particularized as able fully to match him in certain excellences; for he pourtrayed on the faces of beautiful damsels a smile as encharming as Luini's angels bear. And yet he was no imitator of the Milanese artist, for the Suffolk portrait-painter had never seen Luini's work, and how few artists there are who in the attempt to perpetuate the fleeting sunshine of a face do not make the expression painful and vulgar. In every way indeed Gainsborough was one who also gave the all-powerful 'touch of nature.' He never withheld his testimony to his rival's greatness; once,

after an earnest and silent inspection of sixteen new portraits by Reynolds, he exclaimed to an attentive companion—they used strong language in those days—‘The man’s so d——d various! ’

To these great names should be added Romney and Raeburn, as contributing in their degree to the galaxy of splendour—the splendour of the long-eclipsed poetry of the English nation, in design. But we must be satisfied to distinguish the special spirit of the English in portraiture—for in no other branch was there much scope at first. Wilson martyred himself in implanting landscape art. Yet what was done was enough to speak clearly the gladsomeness of Chaucer and Shakespeare, and the hearty rebound from oppressive melancholy which the poets of other races wellnigh ever lack.

Let it be also remembered that decorative design in gold and silver, porcelain, marble and stucco-work bore valiant witness to the vitality of national taste in that day.

The will of our nation declares itself in no timid fashion, and no one in the world would gainsay the verdict that in most purposes it has shown a leading spirit to which all other nations pay respect. Yet no acknowledgement did our forefathers ever gain from abroad for their unpretentious Art. I leave out of count any change in the estimate of it by other peoples that may have found expression in the last twenty years, simply because no judgement of the passing day can be looked upon as a fixed one—external influences too often rule these ephemeral decisions; but certainly from the days of Winckelmann to the beginning of the generation

that is passing away, the verdict on the Continent was universal, that while other grand nations were remarkable for their Art, England was destitute of anything deserving the name. There had been a few startling surprises to this opinion. Canova had called attention to Flaxman's work, and Lawrence, in painting the Princes of the Holy Alliance in Rome, had left a reputation in Italy, still lingering when I was young.

Again, in 1820, Constable had astonished Paris with his landscape known as 'The Leaping Horse,' and he made disciples there whose descendants still gain glory in following him. But these successes were soon ignored. Constable was pronounced '*Constable*,' and I was lately assured by a French artist that he was *un grand paysagiste français*, and the continental judgement against our modest school still remained.

De la Roche's 'Hemicycle' does not, I believe, contain a single Englishman.

In the Pinacotheca at Munich you will see a loggia, painted by Cornelius, with each compartment devoted to the Art of the several countries of Europe. Italy, of course, has its great artists figuring in glorious dignity. Germany, Spain, Belgium, Holland, are all acknowledged in full academic richness. A compartment is generously given to poor England, and here the artist shows ingenious invention with charitable indulgence. The cupola of St. Paul's Cathedral appears as the background of a sleeping youth who personifies the Art genius of the nation; at his ear is the mouth of a trumpet with which Genius, hovering above, is preparing to awaken him. This was painted about the

year 1836, when Turner was in his zenith. Wilkie had painted for thirty years, Stothard had issued numberless exquisite designs, and a dozen other Englishmen—although for the most part in poverty—were doing work that would have honoured the brightest days of the glorious past.

It is yet clear that to the Bavarian artist, as also to his public, England so far had done nothing, and it is no exaggeration to say that abroad our nation has never been regarded as artistic. This verdict of our neighbours has been no doubtful one. With what we know it would be an affectation of deference not to declare that the charge against our forerunners was ridiculous, but it had a ground in the want of Government patronage, and it has consequences of a serious kind in affecting the minds of those who take the world at its own valuation.

Our painters have done little in the branches of historic or ornamental work, because the opportunity has been denied to them; and whenever English youths commit themselves to Art, their prospects of making their lives productive are destroyed, every foreigner that appears being greeted with applause, while the young Englishman has to struggle against prejudice and abuse. I protest against this, for it ruins the purest and best of Art under heaven, where, under the happiest circumstances, the career of an artist (for want of that patronage which continental governments give) must be a hard one. It is not a case of reciprocal emulation, for no other country welcomes English artists in return, and certainly in arts we have nothing to gain from continental masters.

Even for my future countrymen's sake, however, I would not attack this established prejudice. It is not of persons that I speak, but to save our Nation from the disgrace of an Art which is in no sense its own.

I would give an example of past days. Thirty years ago a Frenchman of wild extravagance startled the publishers' world by illustrations to an old legend. There was undoubtedly a nightmare fancy about these, which more than redeemed them from contemptibility ; their weird invention indeed was so striking that it would have been unaccountable had they not gained a passing measure of attention. The press did not stop here, but went into its prescribed ecstasies over continental work, whereupon the artist was engaged to paint a series of enormous canvases illustrating holy subjects. They were of a kind, now the furore is passed, which nobody would praise for any one quality they pretended to have. I will not undertake to criticize them here, but at the time their character did not prevent the religious world from thronging to see them, and, encouraged at all points, the artist continued to produce more and more of his theatrical scenes ; and many public schools still have upon their walls the prints of this false art and false religion, polluting British taste and faith ; and although the Galleries where they were shown have now other and different works upon their walls, the fashion to exploit foreign pretenders flourishes still.

Either protest must be listened to, or Englishmen had better eschew the pursuit altogether in future.

The American, when asked his opinion of our climate,

said, 'I don't call yours a climate at all, I call it a collection of samples.' Well, our Art at this period is a collection of samples, and some of the stormiest, like some of our meteorological disturbances, come from across the Atlantic, not bearing the pure odour of that earth on which our kindred found safety from persecution, but accompanied by all the perfumes of Paris, where young professors go whirlwinding in what they call study for a time, to their great destruction. Amid all the confusion caused by such-like visitations, we possess native artists who are worthy compatriots of our great poets and honourable descendants of the founders of the English school¹.

I have endeavoured to unveil to you a state of matters which needs the overruling of a commanding power. I have dared to imagine that the Collegiates of the country should be prepared to exercise this, and I would venture to urge that 'The Obligations of the Universities towards Art' are to consider the position, and to take steps towards defending honest English Design.

The interests of Poetry and Literature are protected by the fiat which went forth for the diversity of tongues in the plain of Shinar. The idiom of each land receives its currency from the die of Collegiate authority, and all England's distinguished sons of letters who have not been children of Alma Mater have nevertheless indirectly imbibed her teaching.

The art of Design was, until after the days of Matthew

¹ See appended Notes.

Paris, that of the monastically learned. In these days I would not advocate any increased attempt to train painters. We have far too many training schools over the country already, for most still fail in decorative craftsmanship, and they make young men, who would by the old system of apprenticeship be exquisite craftsmen, very bad painters. Moreover, Cennino Cennini¹ recognizes a rule which all the examples of the profession support, that an artist should begin his training by fourteen years of age or younger.

The 'Schools of Design' were first established in accordance with Haydon's suggestion, to revive decorative and ornamental invention, which had died out altogether in the reign of George IV. It is seen that for many years they entirely departed from their original purpose, so that the authorities at Kensington are now wisely taking steps to prevent the inordinate training of mere canvas-painters.

What has been the great want throughout my term of observation has been the due cultivation of Art knowledge by the rulers of our land, and by those who direct and control public taste. There should be no insuperable obstacle to affording the cultivation wanted. I have striven to prove that Literature and Design are prompted by the same spirit; it follows that a good taste in Literature should need little to make it an infallible judge of the sister Art, but it does want that little, and we have but too many examples to show that, for want of it, serious disgrace has fallen upon our nation.

¹ See appended Notes.

The custom of appointing gentlemen on committees of public taste, who have gone through no system of education to guard them against false conclusions, is too often disastrous, as has been proved many times over in the treatment of the best sites in London, notably in the case of Trafalgar Square.

You might imagine that the difficulty of selecting the proper artists to execute public works would be overcome by a public competition, as it was in Italian days. The answer is that meretricious art had not then been invented. The umpires had simply to judge between one class of honest workmanship and another. It was easy to prefer Giotto to Cimabue, Ghiberti to Brunelleschi, Michael Angelo to Bandinelli, but even then a love of fixed rule was beginning in dilettanti minds, and when once a receipt had been made for piety of expression, a patent established for grace, and a fashion for display of bravura, no one has since more readily gone astray than the magnates of Italy did. When Guido, the Caracci, Spagnoletto, Murillo, and Carlo Dolci appeared, their works were hailed as of the highest genius.

Evelyn, as a polished English gentleman of his time, best serves our purpose here. He gained great glory by introducing Grinling Gibbons, who, though a consummate wood-carver, was but a designer of the most finicking order. Further, this amateur displayed his taste by declaring, on an inspection of Verrio's pictures at Windsor, that they were 'incomparable'; adding, "The Resurrection" in the chapel is in my opinion comparable to any painting of the famous Roman master. "The

"Last Supper" over the altar, the work will preserve his name for ages.' This profession of faith was the 'correct thing' of his day, and Evelyn had not knowledge enough to rise above it.

The antidote to false taste is stronger than its poison. With extensive examples of the Art of all peoples and periods before us, and the knowledge that each was national, and with sound recognition of what is base and enervating in literature, no educated man should despair of understanding our Art; but he must be prepared patiently to sift away delusive sophisms. The first step towards this end should be to supply certain graduates of the Universities with a radical knowledge of the sciences employed in Art, to qualify them for the development of a good judgement.

All barely theoretical teaching is apt to mislead the amateur and puff him up with conceit. His study should be practical and of matters that are sure. It might be a question how far such training should extend, but it may be at once laid down that a full acquaintance with the proportions of the human figure is required, with the laws of balance and equipoise which movements and the carrying of weights control, as illustrated in Leonardo da Vinci's treatise and in Flaxman's lectures; beyond such acquirements a knowledge of the laws of perspective should be attained, and as the due corollary the simple laws of light and shade might be mastered: these, and some understanding of the varieties of each nation's Decorative Design, if well established in the amateur mind, might entitle a young graduate to a degree which should qualify him for any

post of responsibility in the control of national works, or in publishing opinions on matters of Art.

One profit in such easy but sure knowledge would be the discovery of how much solid ground the new attainments covered; but it would also reveal how far beyond their confines imagination is called upon to exercise sway, not alone in the grand conception of a work, but in every passage of its construction, so that they would be superior to the false pretensions of bad workmanship, and at the same time they would be fortified against the destructive teaching now much in vogue in prosaic circles, that the bald imitation of a fact in some favourite manner for the passing time, is all that should be required in a work of Art. I might expand upon the advantage of such training, but having engaged your time so long, I will only add my assurance that such a simple provision by the Universities as that indicated, would impart great vitality to the whole range of English Art Design.

I will end my address by endorsing the axiom that Art must be not only the elegant superfluity of the rich, an exotic nursling. If it is to be a blessing it must be strong and bold, and capable of exalting our daily aspirations, it must offer personal comfort and confidence in moments of anxiety and weakness, it must rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; it should also fortify the mind for its national duties—exciting endeavour to make the State righteous and gentle; it should illustrate with unflinching truth our Religion, and embody our highest hopes, making us emulators in the competition towards bringing

infinite justice and mercy to the world. If it is fit to sustain these feelings—and the Art of previous nations did all this in their time and manner—it were a sore disgrace to be careless of it. If it is not a champion for truth and for trust in the Eternal Father, it will become the toy of the idle, and it will perish with them, unmourned and disgraced for ever, to be trodden under foot of the race that is to be. Let us be the heralds of the long-desired era, and take care that the sign-manual of our nation be one bearing proof of our sense of high responsibility. It has not been destitute of this sign of faithfulness hitherto ; it rests with us to multiply such tokens and to make our Art a messenger of glad tidings to all nations.

NOTES

NOTE 2, p. 24.

Canto xxxii.

Wandering with Virgil in the Ninth, the frozen, Circle, after he had heard a voice say to him :

19th line. 'Guarda come passi;
Fa si, che tu non calchi con le piante
Le teste de' fratei miseri lassi,'

he narrates his progress thus :

74th l. 'Al quale ogni gravezza si rauna,
Ed io tremava nell' eterno rezzo:
Se voler fu, o destino, o fortuna,
Non so: ma passeggiando tra le teste
Forte percossi il piè nel viso ad una.
Piangendo mi sgridò: Perchè mi peste?
Se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
Di Mont' Aperti, perchè mi moleste?
Ed io: Maestro mio, or qui m' aspetta,
Si ch' io esca d' un dubbio per costui:
Poi mi farai, quantunque vorrai fretta.
Lo Duca stette; ed io dissi a colui,
Che bestemmiava duramente ancora:
Qual sei tu, che così rampogni altrui?

Or tu chi sei, che vai per l' Antenora
Percotendo, rispose altrui le gote,
Si che, se vivo fossi, troppo fora?

Vivo son io; e caro esser ti puote
Fu mia risposta, se domandi fama
Ch' io metta il nome tuo tra l' altre note.
Ed egli a me: Del contrario ho io brama:
Levati quinci, e non mi dar più lagna:
Chè mal sai lusingar per questa lama.
Allor lo presi per la cuticagna,
E dissi: E converrà che tu ti nomi,
O che capel qui su non ti rimagna
Ond' egli a me: Perchè tu mi dischiomi
Nè ti dirò ch' io sia, nè mostrerolti.

Se mille fiate in sul capo mi tomi.
Io avea già i capelli in mano avvolti,
E tratto glien avea più d' una ciocco,
Latrando lui con gli occhi in già raccolti;
Quando un altro gridò: Che hai tu, Bocca?

Coming to Canto xxxiii he refers to a certain one of the 'tristi,' who like the other condemned ones is frozen up to his chin in the ice, and who suffers with the rest in being unable to free his eyes from his frozen tears. The wretched creature calls out to Dante and Virgil as they pass:

110th l. 'O anime crudeli
Tanto, che data v' è l' utima posta,
Levatemi dal viso i duri veli,
Si ch' io sfoghi il dolor che il cor m' impregna,
Un poco pria che il pianto si raggeli.
Per ch' io a lui: Se vuoi ch' io ti sovvegna,
Dimmi che sei, e s' io non ti disbrigo
Al fondo della ghiaccia ir mi convegna

118th 1. Rispone: Adunque io son Frate Alberigo,' and he recounts his sinful history, with an explanation that sometimes the soul is imprisoned in hell, ere yet the body has ceased to live on earth, which he parenthesizes with:—

127th l. E perchè tu più voluntier mi rade
Le inventriate lagrime dal volto,
Sappi, che tosto che l' anima trade.

130th l. Come sec' io, il corpo suo l' è tolto
Da un Dimonio, che poscia il governa.'

* * * * *

The story reached its end thus:—

148th l. 'Ma distendi oramai in qua la mano,
Aprimi gli occhi: ed io non gliele apersi:
E cortesia fu lui esser villano.'

PAGE 37.

Ford Madox Brown, working from the year 1845 to 1895, and producing a succession of paintings and designs of undoubtedly high genius and of true honest sentiment during the whole of his period—when several very inferior foreign artists were lavishly patronized here—was never able to win that recognition and ease of circumstance with which alone an artist can do his powers full justice. Unfortunately he was not the only English artist to whom wrong was done by the craze for foreign Art.

PAGE 38.

'Cennini di Andria Cennini, da Colle di Valdesa nato, fui informato nella dett' arte dodici anni da Agnolo di Taddeo da Firenze mio maestro, il quale imparrò la detta arte da Taddeo suo padre, il quale suo padre fu battezzato da Giotto, e fu suo discipolo anni venti quattro. Il quale Giotto rimuto l' arte del dipengere di greco in latino e ridusse al moderno: ed ebbe l' arte più compiuta, che avessi mai più nessuno. Per confortare tutti quelli, che all' arte vogliono venire, di quello, che mè fu insegnato dal predetto Agnolo mio maestro, nota farò, e di quello che con mia mano ho provato; principalmente invocando l' alto Iddio omnipotente, cioè Padre, Figliolo, Spirito Santo; secondo quella diletissima avvocata di tutti i peccatori vergine Maria, e santo Luca evangelista primo dipintore cristiano, e l' avvocata mio Santo Eustachio, e generalmente tutti i santi e sante del paradiso. Amen.

‘Non senza cagione di animo gentile alcuni si muovono di venire a quest’ arte, piacendogli per amor naturale. Lo intelletto al disegno si diletta solo chi da loro medesimi la natura a ciò gli trae, senza nulla guida di maestro, per gentilezza di anima. E per questo dilettarsi, seguitano a voler trovare maestro: e con questo si dispongono con amore di ubbidienza, stando in servitù per venire a perfizione di ciò. Alcuni sono, che per povertà e necessità dell’ arte; ma sopra tutti quelli da commendare è quelli, che per amore e gentilezza all’ arte predetta vengono.

‘Or dunque, voi che con anima gentile sete amadori di questa virtù, e principalmente all’ arte venite, adornatevi prima di questo vestimente: cioè amore, timore obbedienza, e perseverenza. E, quanto più tosto puoi, incomincia a mitterle sotto la guida del maestro a imparare: quanto più tardo puoi dal maestro ti parti.’

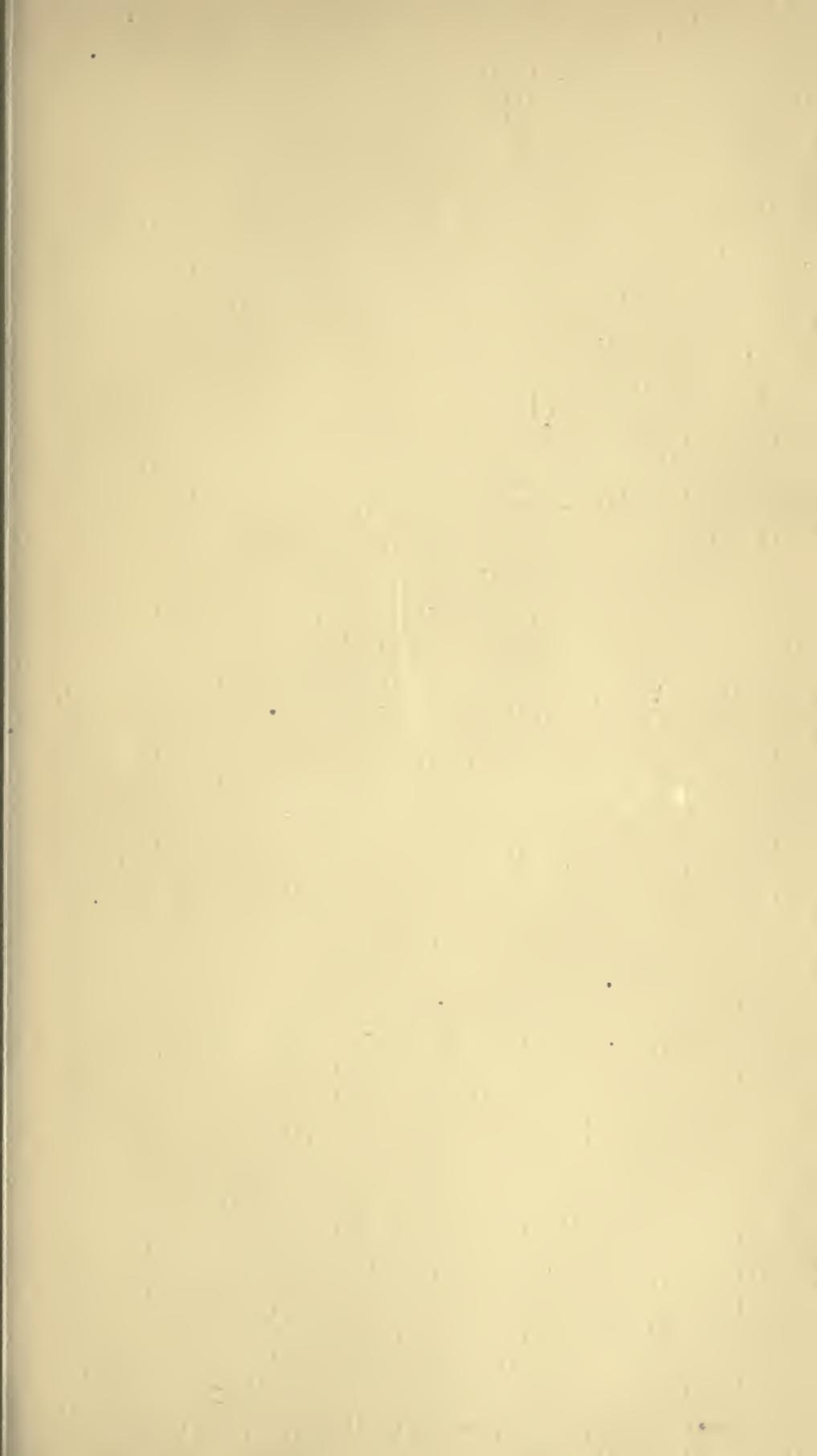
Di Cennino Cennini. *Trattato della Pittura dal Cavaliere Giuseppe Tambroni.* Roma, 1821.

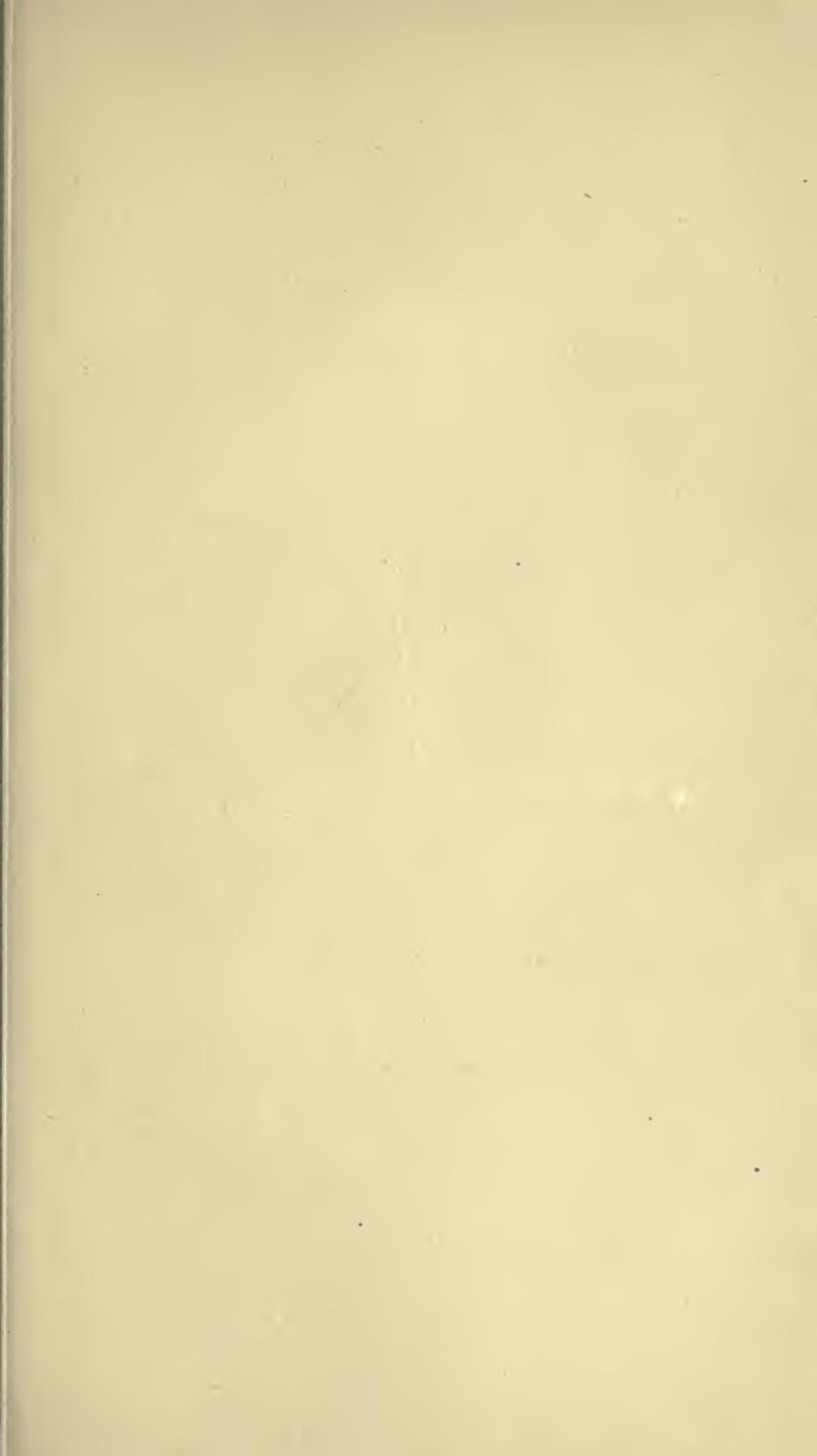
Titian is said to have painted under a master named Rosse before he left Cadore at ten years of age.

Raphael’s father died before he had reached twelve years of age, and there is reason to conclude that the boy had already acquired much proficiency in his art. See Muntz’s *Raphael*.

Oxford

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